

CAEGLAS "CEGIN FOCH" BUILDING RECORDING
PENTREBACH, LAMPETER, CEREDIGION
(NGR SN 5461 4734)

A standing building survey



Prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust



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RHIF YR ADRODDIAD / REPORT NO. 2012/45
RHIF Y PROSIECT / PROJECT RECORD NO. 102931

Mai 2012
May 2012

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Gan / By

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1. SUMMARY

The Dyfed Archaeological Trust undertook a historic building survey of a small out building located at a property 3.5km west of Lampeter. This survey was undertaken in May 2012 by CBA Community Archaeology Training Placement Bursary holders Menna Bell and Sarah Rees, DAT archaeologist Alice Pyper and with assistance and support from the property owners; the Flexmans.

Known colloquially as a "cegin foch" (translated literally, this is a pig's kitchen) the building is a small thatched 19th century house constructed of rubbles stone walls with a mud bond. A wicker fire hood survives in the interior resting on a cross beam beneath which a large copper cauldron would have stood.

At the time of the survey the building was in a poor state of preservation. This survey was undertaken to create a record of the building prior to further deterioration so that it may be used to inform any future conservation and restoration plans.

2. INTRODUCTION

The *cegin foch* is situated on the property of Mr and Mrs Flexman at Caeglas small holding which is located between the villages of Llanwnnen and Pentrebach and is around 3.5km west of Lampeter in Ceredigion (Map 1). The National Grid Reference is **SN 5461 4734**.

At the time of the survey the building was in a vulnerable condition. Already supporting a considerable southwardly lean, timber boards beneath the roof line on the north facing wall had collapsed, exposing more of the existing wall collapse and the main truss. The leaning south facing wall was bulging, pulling the main truss from the north facing wall and thus, increasing the pressure and collapse of the wall on that elevation. However, the interior features were remarkably well preserved for it still maintained its thatched roof and impressive wicker chimney-hood.

The following building survey was undertaken over two days during the second week of May 2012 by the author, colleagues Sarah Rees and Alice Pyper, and with assistance from the property owners and local residents (Photo 1).

3. HISTORIC BACKGROUND

Prior to the building survey, it was necessary to consult a number of sources regarding the historical background of the building. There was no record of the building or the small holding of Caeglas within the Dyfed Archaeological Trust’s Historic Environment Record and so the only easily accessible documentary evidence to consult was the cartographic evidence.

The 1843 tithe map shows the small holding of Caeglas and with a rectangular outbuilding on its property although it is not in the location of the *cegin foch* and is more likely to be another outhouse (Fig 1).

However, the 1st edition 1889 Ordnance Survey map clearly shows a small outbuilding in the current location of the *cegin foch* (Fig 2). This is also clearly represented on the later 2nd edition 1905 Ordnance Survey map (Fig 3).

Caeglas small holding was once part of the Neuadd Fawr estate until the breakup of the estate at its sale on the 17th of June 1931. The catalogue lists Caeglas as lot No.7 and is made up of 4.292 acres. Included in the description of the property the buildings include:

“.....a Dwelling House containing Kitchen, Parlour, Diary, 2Bedrooms, Zinc roofed Out-kitchen; 2 Stall Cow-house and Calf- run, Fowl House and Pigstye.”

In the 19th century a *cegin foch* or a *cegin fach* would have been a common feature on any farm. Whilst regional styles may differ somewhat, these small rectangular out buildings usually had only one door, a window, a large wicker chimney-hood resting on a cross beam or *mantel simdde* beneath which stood a large copper cauldron or *pair* and a small bread oven installed in the gable wall. Usually constructed from stone walls, these buildings had thatched roofs. As a domestic building, it would have served as a place to boil clothes, bake bread or brew beer. However, the name *y gegin foch* indicates its main function. Where pigs were kept indoors and were not able to forage naturally for food, feed for the animals had to be prepared instead. Potatoes and other foodstuffs were boiled in the large cauldron within the outhouse. As the name suggests, *y gegin foch* was literally a pigs’ kitchen.

Although once a common feature, these vestiges of agricultural domestic life are rarely still surviving. Where the small building may still exist on a farm, the wicker chimney-hood is usually removed to increase storage space. It is often rare to find any surviving thatch roof, long since decayed and replaced by slate or corrugated tin or zinc roofs.

Initial research into the farms around the area indicates that this is the only surviving structure in the area. It now stands as a rare monument of the area's agricultural heritage.

4. METHODOLOGY

The building survey was completed over two days and included a detailed drawn, descriptive and photographic record of the internal and external fabric of the building. Scaled drawings were made of all the external elevations along with a scaled floor plan and longitudinal (W-E) cross section of the building (Figs 4 – 7).

A photographic and digital video record was also taken to document the building survey itself. Digital footage was taken of interviews with Mr Flexman and along with footage of neighbours Mr Jones and Mr Williams' recounting their memories of the building. All photos relating to the building in this report are those taken by the author during the building survey itself in May 2012.

The results from this report will be entered in the Trust's Historic Environment Record. As a public resource, this information will be made freely available either by appointment at the Trust office's or online via the *Archwilio* website (www.archwilio.org.uk). However, should a wider community project emerge from this survey, it is the intention to disseminate this information elsewhere such as other online outlets as social media networks, Youtube or a project website.

5. RESULTS OF THE BUILDING RECORDING

5.1 GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Today, the *cegin foch* survives as a near intact, small rectangular building around 5m in length and 4m in width, with a corrugated zinc roof and stands c. 4.5m in height. It is situated in close proximity to the farm house; about 4m from the eastern elevation of the farmhouse. It is orientated in an east/west alignment and at 90° to the farmhouse. The Dairy, cow shed and pigsty have now been converted to join the farmhouse. A wooden door now joins the south-eastern corner of the former pigsty to the north/western corner of the *cegin foch* (Photo 2).

5.2 WALL MATERIALS

The building is constructed of rubble stone, thought to be the local shale or mudstone and is bonded with a mud/clay mortar (Photo 3). Although highly weathered on the exterior and with little remaining, a lime rendering was used to plaster the building internally and externally. Whilst there is no surviving evidence, it is likely that the building was limewashed during its use.

5.3 ROOF STRUCTURE

Bound in ivy, the chimney stack remains intact. Sheets of corrugated zinc now roof the building although a considerable amount of the original thatch roof survives beneath. Due to the limitations of this survey it was not possible to resolutely identify the thatch material. However, from the initial observations it is thought that it consists of a mixture of cereal straw.

The surviving thatch appears to be of the *thrust thatching* technique whereby handfuls of straw are knotted at one end and a thrust into the underthatch using a forked device (Photo 4). This technique was common for the region and into mid Wales. There is very little surviving evidence of the underthatch layer which would have consisted of gorse, heather, straw or turf, either laid in bundles or left loose and then tied or pegged to the foundation

layer. The foundation layer itself appears to be constructed predominately of wattle woven larch on rough timbers which are laid vertically on the purlins.

Four trusses support the ridge pole from which rest the rough timber rafters which, in turn, are supported by a single purlin on each side of the sloping roof. Provisional observations of this roof timber suggest that this too is larch. However, if the building were to undergo future conservation work it would be essential to verify these materials and to obtain a sample of the thatch material for further analysis.

5.4 DOOR

The door to the building is on the gable end; itself the west facing elevation. The wooden door is of single-plank construction with splicing repair work at the bottom of the door with hook and band hinges. There does not appear to be any evidence of a door latch of any kind, instead a well-worn, a finger sized hole serves as a handle (Photo 5).

5.5 WINDOW

A single window on the southern elevation illuminates the building. This window is well constructed with lead canes in the glass panes and is thought to be made of oak. During the building survey, it was suggested that the window may be 18th century in origin and is likely to have been taken from elsewhere, possibly demoted from the farmhouse itself (Photo 6).

5.6 FLOOR AND WALLS

The interior of the building better preserves the character and history of the building. The hard floor appears to be crushed lime and the interior wall elevations preserve a high percentage of its lime rendering or plaster.

5.7 INTERNAL FITTINGS

Inside the building a brick lined hearth still survives beneath the wicker firehood (Photo 7). These bricks are frogged with the names "TRIMSARN METALIC" and "JCE" (Photo 8). Superficial research into these bricks suggests that "TRIMSARN METALIC" bricks originate from brick works near Kidwelly in Carmarthenshire. No further information has been retrieved for the origin of the "JCE" bricks (source : <http://www.penmorfa.com/bricks>).

The impressive wicker chimney-hood appears to be constructed of larch wattle and the outside of the hood is covered in daub. There does not appear to be any evidence for daub on the inside of the hood and the wattle is blackened with soot (Photo 9). This firehood rests on a cross-beam (also known as a *mantell smidde*) which runs across the width of the building. Such wattle and daub chimney-hoods would have been common place in such rural buildings across Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion during the 18th and 19th centuries.

To the bottom right of this chimney-hood and built into this gable wall is a stone and brick lined bread oven with a fire box beneath it. The oven doors do not survive but it is likely that this would have had a cast iron door as was typical for ovens at the time.

6. ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

The *cegin foch* is situated within the garden of the main farmhouse. Just in front of this building is a rockery garden with a small pond feature. At the end of the survey, a cast iron cooking pot lid was discovered amongst this rockery (Photo 10). On further enquiry to the Flexman's it was revealed that this pond feature was in fact a large cooking pot which had been reinstated in the garden (Photo 11). It is very likely that this cooking pot might have originated from the *cegin foch*.

As discussed previously, the building is in a vulnerable condition and is very likely to deteriorate rapidly following another couple of harsh winters. If conservation action is to be undertaken then this should be done within the very near future.

7. RECOMMENDATION FOR CONSERVATION

If conservation work is to be undertaken then further work is required to determine the content of the thatch; a sample of the surviving thatch should be taken in order to identify the species profile represented.

It would also be advantageous to consult with conservation architects to provide appropriate advice. It may also be helpful to seek advice from organisations such as the Society of Protection of Ancient Buildings who can provide conservation and restoration guidance.

Finally, this *cegin foch* survives as a rare testament to the area’s agricultural heritage and it remains as an valuable asset to the community.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank the property owners Mr& Mrs Alan Flexman of Caeglas, for actively encouraging and enabling the following building recording and for their generous hospitality. Many thanks also to Mr Flexman for his contributions to the building recording.

Many thanks also to neighbours Mr Andrew Jones of Pentre Sion and Mr David Williams of Dolaugwyddion farms for volunteering their time to the recording of the building and for supplying their invaluable local knowledge and memories of the vernacular architecture and heritage of the area. Thanks also to Mrs Bethan Evans of Llanwnnen for her visit during the recording and for sharing her local knowledge and interest.

Grateful thanks are also given to Geoff Ward of the RCAHMW and his CBA Community Archaeology Training Placement Sophie Gingell, for volunteering a half day of their time to assist in the building recording and for sharing their records for the benefit of this report.

Equal thanks are also given to Martin Davies, formerly a conservation architect with the National Trust, for his visit during the recording, for sharing his knowledge of the vernacular architecture and heritage of the area and for his recommendations regarding the restoration of the building.

Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues Alice Pyper and Sarah Rees for their support and assistance during the building recording. I would also like to thank Louise Austin for initiating the opportunity for this building recording in the first instance. This building survey was also supported by Cynnal Y Cardi.

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10. MAPS



Map 1: Location on map of Caeglas small holding on the 1:50,000 scale Landranger Ordnance Survey map

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11. FIGURES



Fig 1. Extract of the 1843 Tithe map showing the farmhouse and additional outbuilding on the holding.

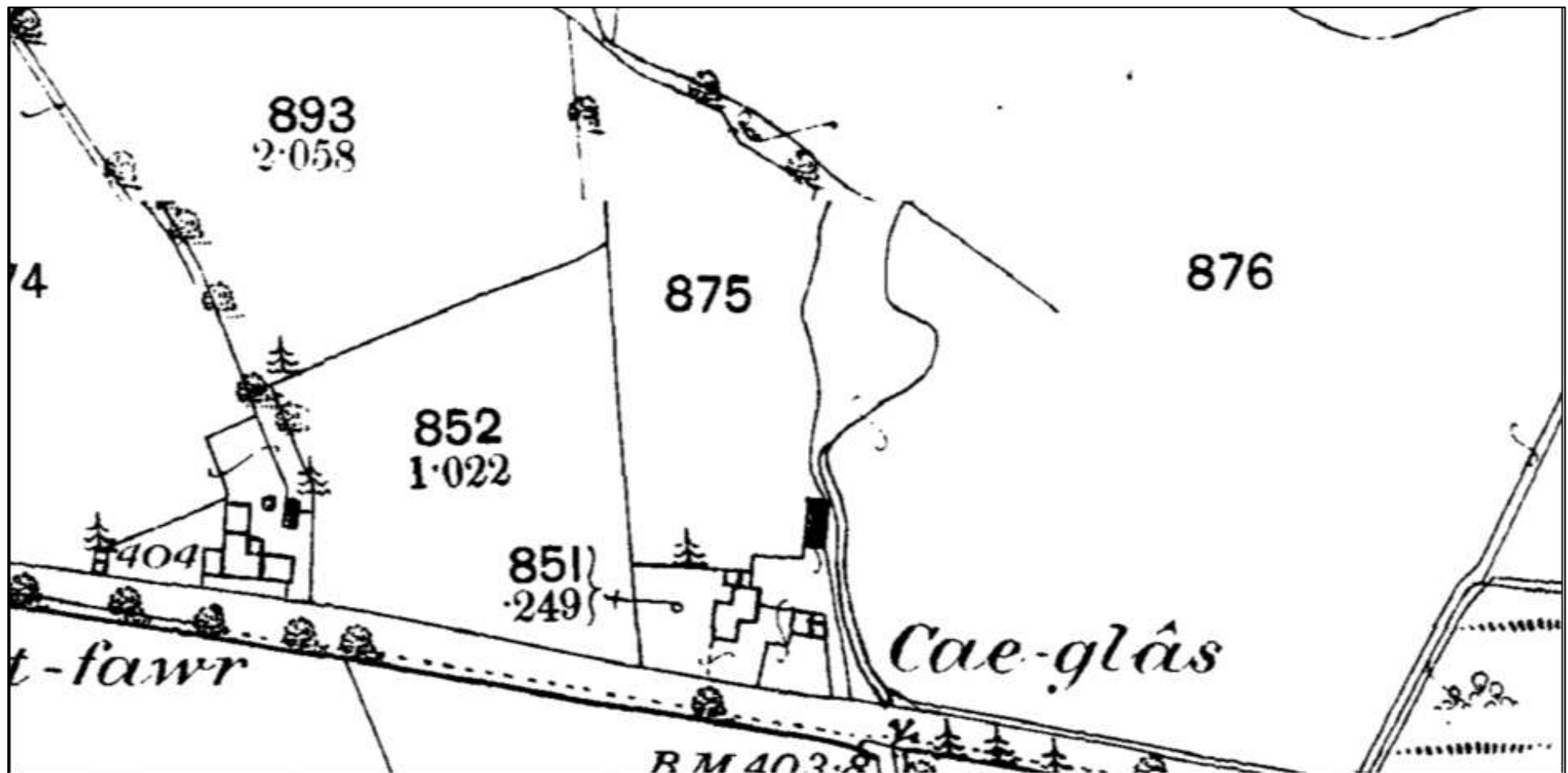


Fig 2: Extract of the 1889 1:25in Ordnance Survey map

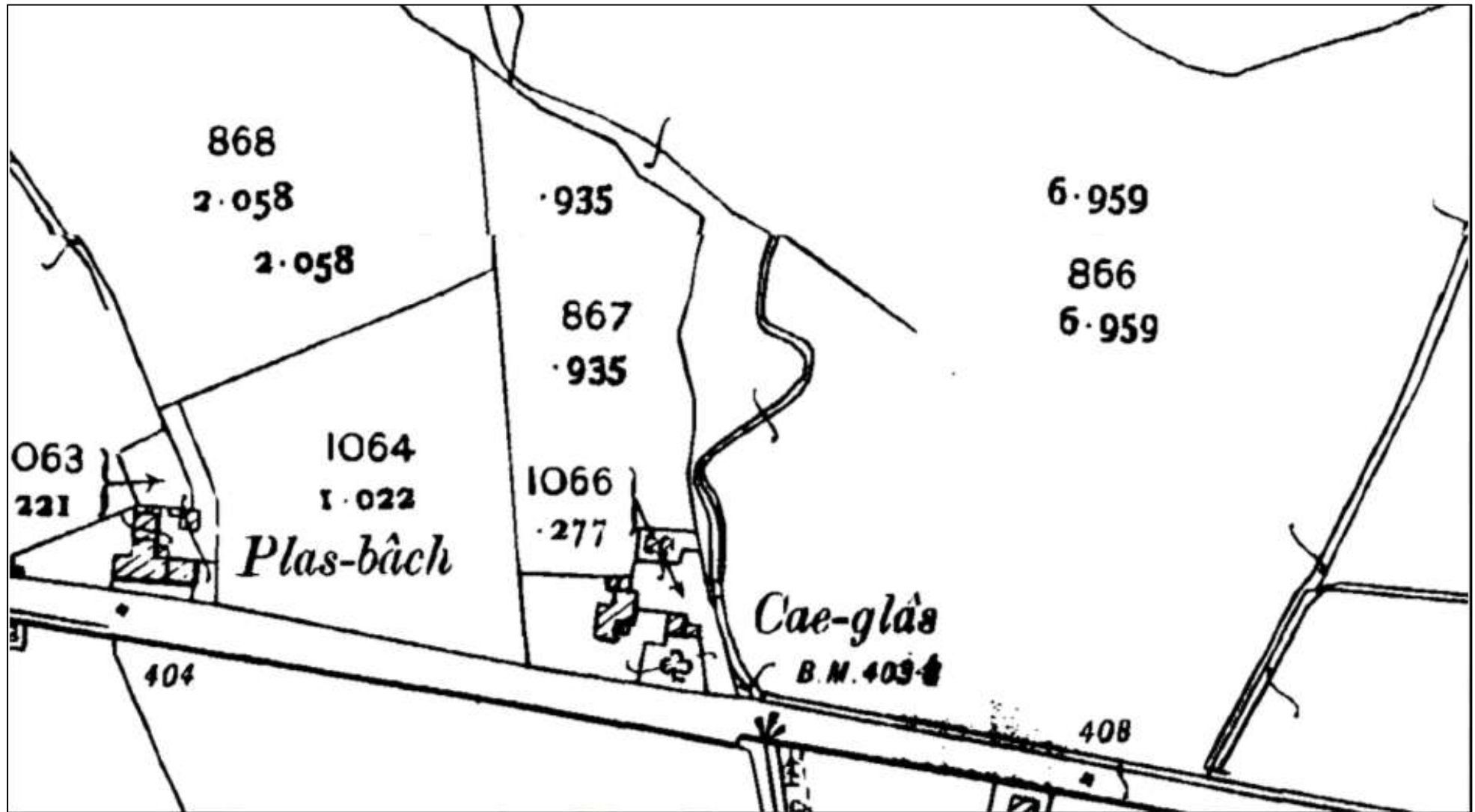


Fig 3: Extract from the 1905 1:25in Ordnance Survey map

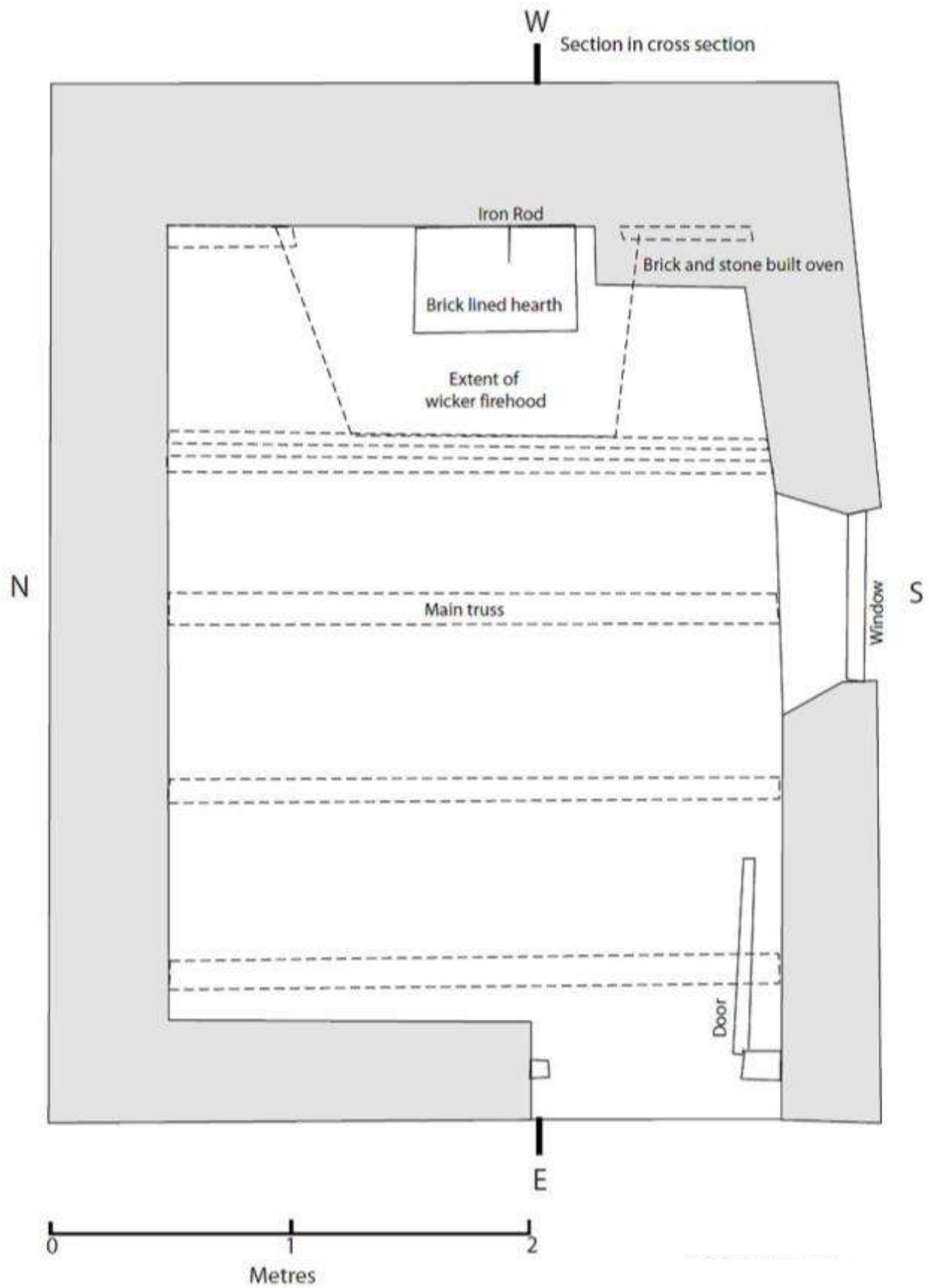


Fig 4. Plan of Cegin Foch

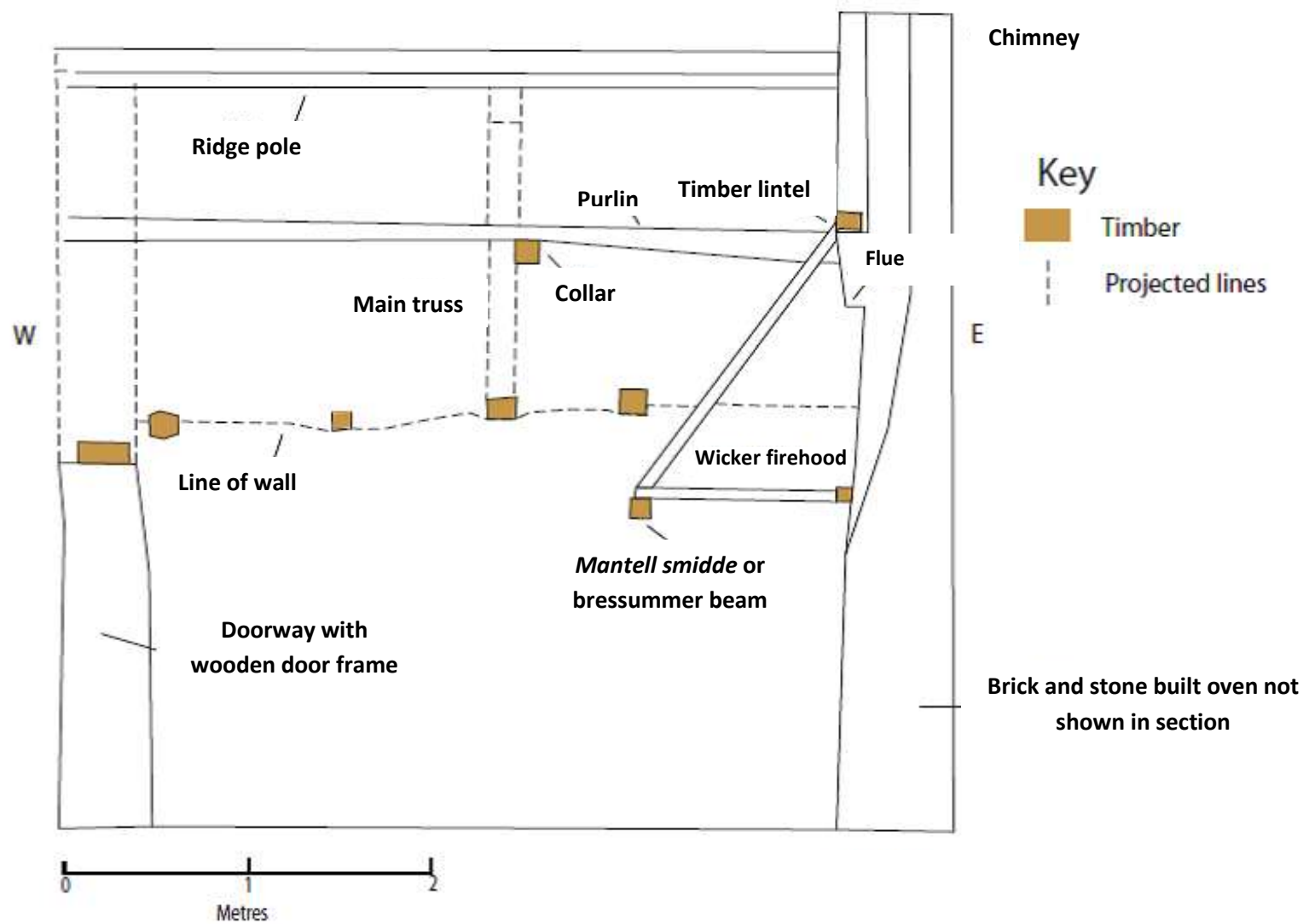


Fig 5 . West – East interior elevation

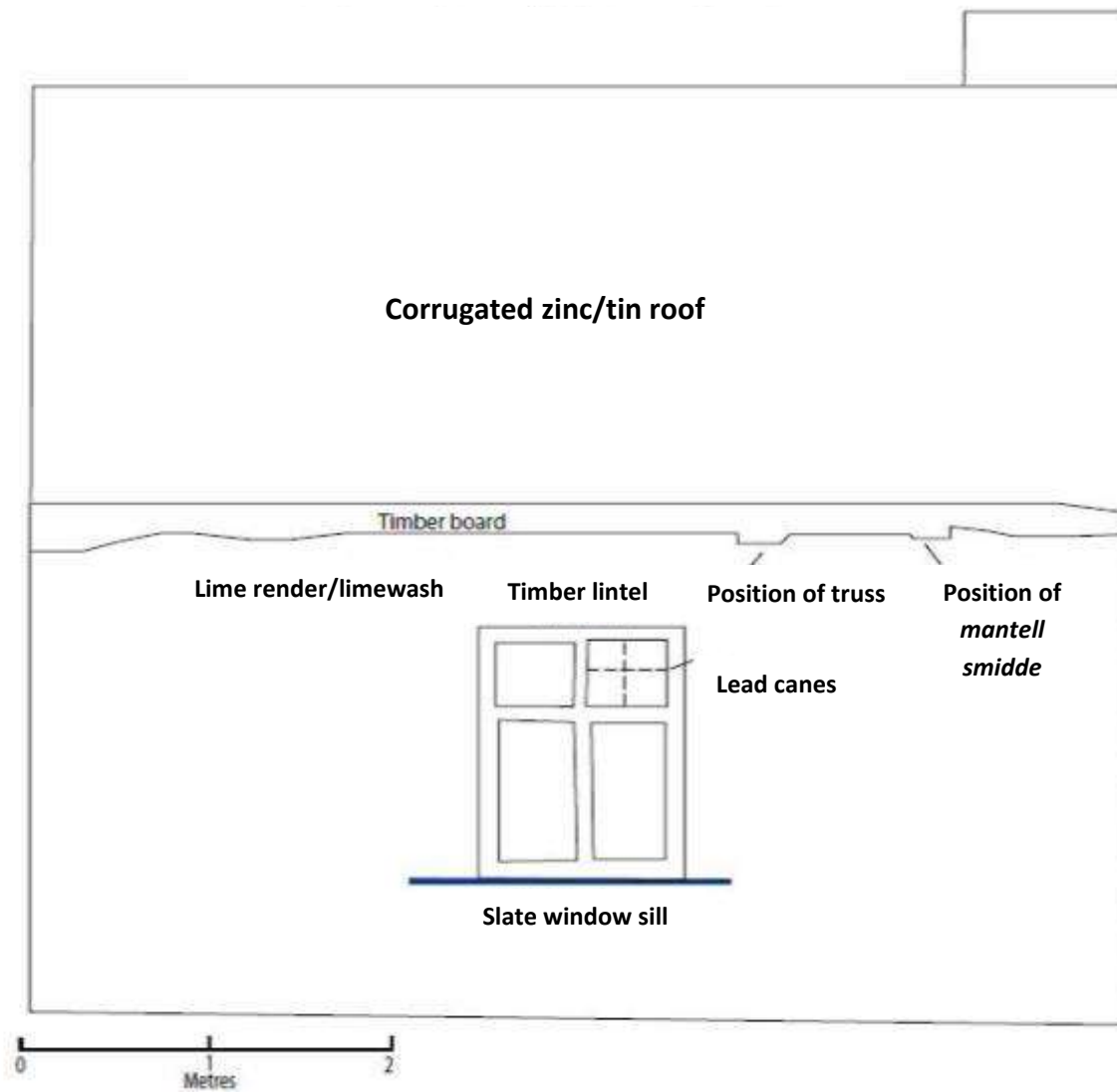


Fig 6 . South facing exterior elevation

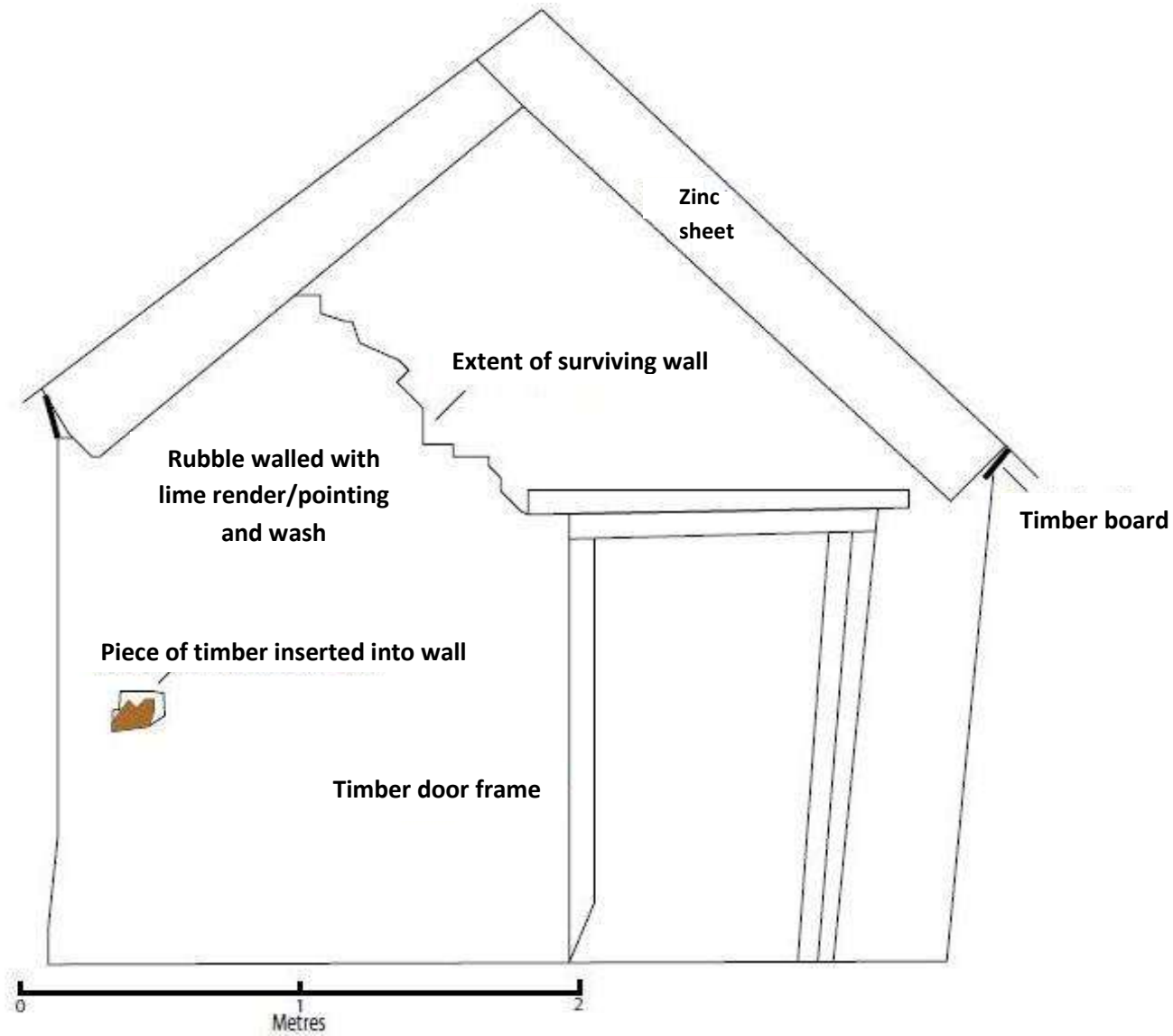


Fig 7. West facing external elevation

12. PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 1. Neighbour and volunteer Mr Andrew Jones records the window of the building with assistance from DAT archaeologists Alice Pyper and Sarah Rees (Photo; M Bell).



Photo 2. This photo (taken to show the north facing elevation of the *cegin foch*), shows the building's close proximity to the farm house. The sloping slated roof of the lean-to in the right of the foreground is that of the suspected former pigsty (Photo: M.Bell).



Photo 3. Viewed in cross-section; this image shows the rubble shale walling, clay/mud bonding and lime plaster or rendering (Photo; M.Bell).



Photo 4. Knotted bunches of straw indicate a *thrust thatching* technique. The wattle woven larch foundation layer provides a convenient home for a swallow's nest! (Photo: M.Bell).



Photo 5. The single plank wooden door. Note the splicing repair work at the bottom of the door and the small hole handle substitute towards to top left of the door. (Photo: M. Bell).



Photo 6. Beneath the modern reinforcements, the original window frame, panes and lead comes are still visible. (Photo: M. Bell).



Photo 7. The brick lined hearth visible beneath the larch wattle chimney-hood resting on the cross beam. Note the daub on the exterior of the hood. (Photo: M Bell).



Photo 8. The frogged fire bricks in the hearth. (Photo: M Bell).



Photo 9. Interior shot of the wattle chimney-hood showing the soot blackened larch wattle. Note the absence of daub on the interior of the hood (Photo: M Bell).



Photo 10. The cast iron cooking pot lid found in the rockery in front of the building (Photo: M Bell).



Photo 11. The cooking pot reinstated in the rockery as a pond feature (Photo: M Bell).

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Swydd / Position:

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Mae'r adroddiad hwn wedi ei gael yn gywir a derbyn sêl bendith
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Yn unol â'n nôd i roddi gwasanaeth o ansawdd uchel, croesawn unrhyw sylwadau sydd
gennych ar gynnwys neu strwythur yr adroddiad hwn

As part of our desire to provide a quality service we would welcome any comments you
may have on the content or presentation of this report

